



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: November 7, 2024 REPORT NO. HRB-24-040

HEARING DATE: November 21, 2024

SUBJECT: **ITEM #2 – Willard and Agnes Watson House**

RESOURCE INFO: [California Historical Resources Inventory Database \(CHRID\) link](#)

APPLICANT: Donna and Manuel Garcia

LOCATION: 3330 Brant Street, Uptown Community, Council District 3
APN 452-454-1900

DESCRIPTION: Consider the designation of the Willard and Agnes Watson House located at 3330 Brant Street as a historical resource.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Designate the Willard and Agnes Watson House located at 3330 Brant Street as a historical resource with a period of significance of 1950 under HRB Criterion C. The designation excludes the 2000 addition on the rear and secondary, clerestory level with flat roof. This recommendation is based on the following findings:

The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics through the retention of character defining features of the Custom Ranch style and retains architectural integrity from its 1950 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a wide, single-story form with horizontal massing; large, multi-lite, awning and casement windows; a prominent brick chimney; and a low-sloped shed roof with boxed eaves. The resource also displays a large attached garage, and use of both horizontal and vertical wood siding with brick site features.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board in conjunction with the owner's desire to have the site designated as a historical resource.

The property was identified in the 2016 Uptown Survey and given a Status Code of 5S3, "Appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation." The property is also a contributor to the Heart of Bankers Hill Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 17, 2024.

The historic name of the resource, the Willard and Agnes Watson House has been identified consistent with the Board's adopted naming policy and reflects the name of Willard and Agnes Watson who constructed the house as their personal residence.

In order to be eligible for designation and listing on the City's Register, a resource must meet one or more of the City's designation criteria as specified in the Historical Resources Guidelines of the Land Development Manual and retain integrity as it relates to the significance of the resource. Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance, which requires an understanding of the physical features and characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance. The National, California, and City of San Diego Registers recognize location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as the seven aspects of historical integrity.

Although not all seven aspects of integrity need to be present for a property to be eligible for designation, the record must demonstrate that the property retains enough physical and design characteristics to reflect and convey the significance of the property. Each resource depends on certain aspects of integrity, more than others, to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects are most important to a particular property requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The [*Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*](#) provide information regarding the City's designation criteria, as well as guidance on their application and how to evaluate the integrity of a resource.

ANALYSIS

The property located at 3330 Brant Street is a single-story, Custom Ranch style single-family residential building with attached garage constructed in 1950 in the Uptown Community. The property is in the residential neighborhood of Horton's Addition subdivision in the Banker's Hill neighborhood on the west side of Brant Street, between Thorn and Upas Streets. The property is in its original location.

Since its construction in 1950 the property has been modified as follows: the front door, sidelight, and garage door were replaced at an unknown time between 1970 and 2007. The front door was replaced with a solid wood door, similar to the original in 2023. The garage door was replaced with a horizontal wood paneled mechanical lift door, similar the original wood tilt up door, in 2023. The sidelights to the front door were restored to the original design in 2023. The original stepped brick planters were partially converted to steps between the late 1970s and 2007. A remodel project was permitted and completed in 2000, prior to the establishment of the current historical review process for non-designated properties, which extended the rear of the resource alongside raising the sloped roof projection to a flat roof. A French door and window were also added to the rear of the resource at this time. Solar panels were installed on the western portion of the upper roof in 2022.

A Historical Resource Research was prepared by property owners, Donna and Manuel Garcia, which concludes that the resource is significant under HRB Criterion C and staff concurs. This determination is consistent with the *Guidelines for the Application of Historical Resources Board Designation Criteria*, as follows.

CRITERION C - Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period or method of construction or is a valuable example of the use of natural materials or craftsmanship.

The subject resource is a single-story, single-family residence with an attached garage constructed in 1950 in the Custom Ranch style. The house features a low-sloped shed roof with wide overhanging eaves with an inverted shed boxed soffit. The resource is clad in horizontal tongue and groove wood siding and features a variety of square, wood awning windows. Centered on the primary façade is a secondary, clerestory level with a flat roof, vertical tongue and groove wood siding, and wood awning windows. A large brick chimney is centered on the east façade. A red brick driveway and red brick steps, with planters on the right side, following the slope of the driveway, lead from Brant Street to the slightly set back front door with sidelight. A partial width brick site pony wall is located on the south side of the primary façade.

The Custom Ranch style of architecture was popular between 1950 and 1975 and is differentiated from Tract Ranch homes because they were typically custom designed with a specific client in mind. The Ranch style became the era's most prevalent type of residential construction in San Diego. Custom Ranch Homes are generally more lavish than their tract counterparts, but like Tract Ranch housing, materials and detailing are generally traditional. Primary character defining features include horizontal massing, wide to the street; usually single-story; custom details such as wood shutters, large wood windows, or large prominent brick or stone chimneys; and prominent low-sloped gabled or hipped roofs with deep overhangs. Secondary character defining features include a sprawling floor plan frequently "L" or "U" shaped around a central courtyard; large, attached carports or garages; and expensive building materials such as wood shingle roofing, wood siding, brick, stone, and adobe which are usually much more generous in materials and craftsmanship than tract homes.

Of the seven aspects of integrity, design, materials, and workmanship are the most critical to the property's ability to convey significance under HRB Criterion C as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Custom Ranch style of architecture. The property, which has been modified as detailed in the beginning of the analysis section of this report, retains the relevant aspects of integrity. The addition in the rear and secondary, clerestory level with flat roof do not detract from the character-defining features of the resource and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The garage door and front door have been replaced with new elements in the same materials as the originals with a similar design. The brick planters in the front were partially altered to provide a walkway but were also left with planting space, it's original intent and use. This minimizes the loss of integrity of design of this hardscape feature. Overall, the resource retains all character-defining features. Therefore, the property does retain integrity to its 1950 period of significance under HRB Criterion C.

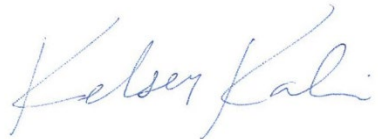
Significance Statement: The house continues to convey the historic significance of the Custom Ranch style through the retention of character defining features including a wide, single-story form with horizontal massing; large, multi-lite, awning and casement windows; a prominent brick chimney; and a low-sloped shed roof with boxed eaves. The resource also displays a large, attached garage, and use of both horizontal and vertical wood siding with brick site features. Therefore, staff recommends designation under HRB Criterion C. The 2000 addition on the rear and projection is excluded from the designation due to its construction outside of the period of significance.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Designation brings with it the responsibility of maintaining the building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The benefits of designation include the availability of the Mills Act Program for reduced property tax; the use of the more flexible Historical Building Code; flexibility in the application of other regulatory requirements; the use of the Historical Conditional Use Permit which allows flexibility of use; and other programs which vary depending on the specific site conditions and owner objectives. If the property is designated by the HRB, conditions related to restoration or rehabilitation of the resource may be identified by staff during the Mills Act application process, and included in any future Mills Act contract.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted and staff's field check, it is recommended that the Willard and Agnes Watson House located at 3330 Brant Street be designated with a period of significance of 1950 under HRB Criterion C as an example of the Custom Ranch style of architecture. The designation excludes the 2000 rear addition and projection.



Kelsey Kaline
Associate Planner
City Planning Department



Suzanne Segur
Senior Planner/ HRB Liaison
City Planning Department

KK/SS

Attachment(s):

1. Draft Resolution
2. Applicant's Historical Report under separate cover

RESOLUTION NUMBER N/A
ADOPTED ON 11/21/2024

WHEREAS, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego held a noticed public hearing on 11/21/2024, to consider the historical designation of the **Willard and Agnes Watson House** (owned by Donna and Manuel R. Garcia, 3330 Brant Street, San Diego, CA 92104) located at **3330 Brant Street, San Diego, CA 92103**, APN: **452-494-1400-00**, further described as BLK 395 LOT 1 N 1/2 LOT H & ALL in the City of San Diego, County of San Diego, State of California; and

WHEREAS, in arriving at their decision, the Historical Resources Board considered the historical resources report prepared by the applicant, the staff report and recommendation, all other materials submitted prior to and at the public hearing, inspected the subject property and heard public testimony presented at the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the property would be added to the Register of Designated Historical Resources as **Site No. 0**, and

WHEREAS, designated historical resources located within the City of San Diego are regulated by the Municipal Code (Chapter 14, Article 3, Division 2) as such any exterior modifications (or interior if any interior is designated) shall be approved by the City, this includes but is not limited to modifications to any windows or doors, removal or replacement of any exterior surfaces (i.e. paint, stucco, wood siding, brick), any alterations to the roof or roofing material, alterations to any exterior ornamentation and any additions or significant changes to the landscape/ site.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Historical Resources Board based its designation of the Willard and Agnes Watson House on the following findings:

(1) The property is historically significant under CRITERION C for its distinctive characteristics of the Custom Ranch style and retains architectural integrity from its 1950 period of significance. Specifically, the resource exhibits a wide, single-story form with horizontal massing; large, multi-lite, awning and casement windows; a prominent brick chimney; and a low-sloped shed roof with boxed eaves. The resource also displays a large, attached garage, and use of both horizontal and vertical wood siding with brick site features. This finding is further supported by the staff report, the historical research report, and written and oral evidence presented at the designation hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in light of the foregoing, the Historical Resources Board of the City of San Diego hereby approves the historical designation of the above named property. The designation includes the parcel and exterior of the building as Designated Historical Resource **Site No. 0**.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the designation shall exclude the 2000 addition on the rear and projection.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Secretary to the Historical Resources Board shall cause this resolution to be recorded in the office of the San Diego County Recorder at no fee, for the benefit of the City of San Diego, and with no documentary tax due.

Vote:

BY: _____
TIM HUTTER, Chair
Historical Resources Board

APPROVED: MARA W. ELLIOTT,
CITY ATTORNEY

BY: _____
JEANNE MACKINNON,
Deputy City Attorney